The Ideal of a Girl
In the Light of the Cross.

Jan. 31, 1937.

The Heart of God
In the Light of the Cross.

Rom.5:8 "But God proves his love for us by this, that Christ died for us while we were still sinners."

INTRO. The Methodist bishop's sermon on the death of Jesus. The reason for my dry eyes--I misunderstood his interpretation in terms of the Jewish blood sacrifices, which today form no part of our religious exercises and which are either ~~under~~ misunderstood or have to be explained.

I have realized since that Paul and the apostles could not have preached intelligently except in terms of the altar for the bloody sacrifices were an essential part of Jewish worship.

But the vehicles of understanding in our generation deal in terms of cause and effect, of chemistry, biology, psychology, etc. Unless there be in the cross of Christ that which produces an effect, it will mean little to us. It must produce an effect just as definitely as fertilizing the soil produces an effect in the crops, or as psychological motives changes the choices of men. What effect, if any, did the death of Jesus produce? The historical theories of the atonement have held that the cross made a difference in God's feelings towards us and also in men's attitude towards God. We ask, first of all, therefore:

I. What effect has the cross of Christ upon God? Did the dying of Jesus make God a better God than he otherwise would have been? Is God more kindly disposed towards us, more lenient with our sins and inclined to forgive us than he was towards David or Abraham or the others who lived before Christ? Did the cross of Jesus have an actual effect upon God? If God is the same yesterday, today and forever, how could he be affected by the death of Jesus?

1. The first thing to bear in mind is that all that Jesus accomplished in his death for us is the will of God. "I and my Father are one." Jn.10:30.
The text- Jn.3:16
Atonement- At-one-ment.
Jesus is not a Jew-born that way but became universally-minded thru at-one-ment with God.

I. M. The Cross reveals the heart of God.

God, in his eternal love is the source of salvatio
the sender of his son.

Christ, in his sinless life, in his complete self-
sacrifice, reveals God's holy love.

The released young man from prison. Merchant.

The psychological change wrought in the merchan
by his act of kindness to the family of the
jail-bird.

But the spirit of forgiveness was always in the
heart of God. That is his nature, and becaus
it is his nature he suffers because of the
sins of his children even as Jesus suffered
on the cross and he is ever longing to for-
give even as Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive
them for they know not what they do."

The cross means, whatever else, that the sacrificial
spirit of Jesus is eternal in the heart of
God and that Calvary is the sublime revelat-
ion of the heart of the Infinite.

II. What effect has the Cross upon man?

Christ aimed to make friendship between God and man. The heart of the atonement is reconciliation, or the making of friends in the broadest sense. It involves the introduction of strangers and the making friends of enemies.

Four reasons why two might not be friends

1. Ignorance of each other's existance
2. Disinterestedness in each other's lives
3. The conception that on e is in a higher class than the other.
4. Enmity, especially when based upon wrong doing

To develop friendship where none exists, to develop common interests where there has been none, to remove any feeling of class distinction, and hardest of a ll to banish enmity even when founded upon wrong doing, that is reconciliation. These forces are exactly what Christ brings to bear thru his cross, working reconciliation between God and men by the revelation of the heart of God.

II.M. The Cross Introduces Us toGod.

Passing person after person on a crowded street.

Not acquainted, not interested.

We treat God the same way. He is here on every hand- in tree and flower, in birds and beasts in sunshine, in the stars, in the universe, in my fellow-men, in myself; but I take him as a matter of course. I do not realize his personal ~~p~~presence, I have no desire to converse with him- it has never occurred to me that I could.

Then the Cross of Christ confronts me. Over it is written, "He that hath seen me hath seen t the Father". Can it be that the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is as passionately interested in me and in each of his children as Jesus was when he died for men? Instantly we see that God is more than a creator, more than a great electric current animating all things, more than a great king interested in the mass of men if at all, He is more even than all power, all wisdom, all intelligence. He is something more than just and holy. He is as tender as a mother, as gentle, as forgiving, as self-sacrificing as Jesus. Whatever else the cross of Christ stands for, it makes us see the heart of the Heavenly Father. It introduces us to God.

3. The Cross interests men in God.

Henry Churchill King says that friendship involves mutual interests, mutual self-revelation, mutual trust and mutual self-surrender.

Surely God is not interested in me personally! How can there be mutual interests between God and his finite children of earth? Or mutual trust, or mutual understanding or mutual self-surrender?

Then the Cross of Christ challenges us. On it Jesus proves that he is interested in every man personally, deeply interested, he trusts us, he actually surrenders to us- he comes more than half-way to to meet us in friendship. He and the Father are one. "I, if I be lifted up-"

II.4. The Cross means we may be Friends of God.

The caste system of human society.

We placeGod in a class by himself. He is the unapproachable. We must approach him with "Holy,holy, holy. He looks down upon us. Then the Cross meets our astonished gaze. The great heart of the universe is like the heart of Christ. What does this mean for us? It means that there is no child of God so humbl or lowly that he will find God unapproachable. It means that we are as welcome to the inner circle of God's life as were the children welcome in the arms of Jesus. It means that God loves and pities his faltering and failing ones as a good father pities his children; in short, it means that we may draw near and be actual friends of God.

5. The Cross wins men to God.

The Cross reveals the awfulness of sin on the one hand with so much force, and the merciful love of God, on the other, with so much power, that the sincere soul is mightily moved to repentan and incited to turn from evil to good.

Can anyone with open mind and sincere heart contemplate the crucifixion of Jesus without such results?

6. The Cross reveals the eternal fact of God's love and righteousness, forgiveness and mercy.

When we sin God suffers even as Jesus did. When we truly repent God forgives even as the father of the prodigal son forgave, buried the shame, reinstated and restored.

God's arms are open wide to each and every one of his children in true friendship and love.